

EXOTIC

African horse sickness

Fact sheet

July 2023

Introductory statement

African horse sickness (AHS) is **not found** in Australia. AHS is an acute or sub-acute, infectious, insect-borne viral disease of horses, donkeys and mules.

Horses are more susceptible to AHS than mules and, generally, donkeys have a lower susceptibility. AHS is frequently fatal in susceptible horses.

The virus is transmitted by midges (*Culicoides* spp.), so there is a seasonal incidence in temperate climates. Recovered horses develop good immunity to the serotype that infected them but remain susceptible to other serotypes. Horses do not become long-term carriers.

Dogs can become infected through eating viraemic animals and usually contract a fatal form of the disease. Dogs are not a favoured host for *Culicoides* spp., and it is doubtful whether dogs play any role in the spread or maintenance of the AHS virus.

If you suspect a case of AHS you should immediately call the **Emergency Animal Disease Hotline (1800 675 888)**.

References and other information

The latest information on AHS is available from the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) website: www.woah.org/app/uploads/2021/09/african-horse-sickness-1.pdf and www.woah.org/fileadmin/Home/eng/Health_standards/tahm/3.06.01_AHS.pdf

WOAH detection, reporting and control measures are located at:

www.woah.org/fileadmin/Home/eng/Health_standards/tahc/current/chapitre_ahs.pdf

The Disease Strategy for the control and eradication of African horse sickness, version 5.0, 2022 is available as part of the AUSVETPLAN series. Wildlife considerations as part of response are addressed in the WARS AUSVETPLAN. Both can be found at:

<https://animalhealthaustralia.com.au/ausvetplan>

Information available on distribution and abundance of feral horses and donkeys in Australia can be accessed at the “Significant invasive species (vertebrate pests)” (2008)

https://pestsmart.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/06/NLWRA_Invasive_Animals_Booklet.pdf.

Acknowledgements

This sheet summarises information available in the WARS AUSVETPLAN. We are grateful to those who have had input into this plan and Animal Health Australia who maintain the plan. The full AUSVETPLAN is available at: <https://animalhealthaustralia.com.au/ausvetplan>

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To provide feedback on fact sheets

Wildlife Health Australia welcomes your feedback on fact sheets. Please email admin@wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au. We would also like to hear from you if you have a particular area of expertise and are interested in creating or updating a WHA fact sheet. A small amount of funding is available to facilitate this.

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